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ABSTRACT

Guidelines are given for providing bookmobile service to disadvantaged adults. There is information on selection and training of bookmobile staff, types of services which may be offered, stocking and displaying both print and non-print materials on the bookmobile, ways to determine bookmobile stops, publicizing the service, costs, and pitfalls to avoid. A list of readings is provided along with brief descriptions of the bookmobile services of eight libraries. (LS)

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IR 002 174

LIBRARY SERVICE GUID

Appalachian Adult Education Center

BOOKMOBILE SERVICE

MOVING THE LIBRARY TO DISADVANTAGED ADULTS

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APPALACHIAN ADULT EDUCATION CENTER

Public Library Training Institutes
Library Service Guide No. 21

BOOKMOBILE SERVICE: MOVING THE LIBRARY TO DISADVANTAGED ADULTS

by

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March, 1975

Preface

This guide is one of a series on library services to disadvantaged adults. The purpose of the series is to explo alternative ways public libraries can expand services to this special group.

Each guide attempts to recognize the differences among public library budgets, staff size and training, and th differences among the communities libraries serve. Each guide deals with a particular service and, where possible, suggest several alternative ways the library can provide that service to disadvantaged adults. The library, then, can and shoul further adapt the suggestions to fit the resources and needs of its local community.

The guides combine (1) a thorough search of the library literature; (2) the knowledge of professional librarians, wh wrote many of the guides and evaluated the entire series, and (3) the experience of the Appalachian Adult Educatio Center (AAEC) in designing interagency educational programs for disadvantaged adults.

The AAEC has worked with state, regional, and local public libraries in seven states in projects funded by the Burea of Libraries and Learning Resources of the U.S. Office of Education. In one project, four urban and three rural cente demonstrated ways public libraries and adult basic education programs could improve their services to disadvantaged adult by coordinating efforts in reader guidance, recruitment, library orientation, community referral, and in the selection, use and delivery of materials. The AAEC also conducted institutes in local public libraries in seven states in designing an implementing library services for disadvantaged adults.

Work on those and other projects led to three conclusions, upon which the guides are based: (1) that undereducate adults need information and services to help solve problems; (2) that the public library can meet those needs throug adjustments in procedures and interagency cooperation; and (3) that the materials and services required for disadvantage adults are useful and useable to all adults.

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DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Bookmobiles—vehicles especi
equipped with shelves or racks
carrying print and nonprint mate
and serving as itinerant or trave
libraries.

Disadvantaged Adult—any out-of-sc
person 16 years or older who
below the tenth grade level, or w
income is below poverty level.

INTRODUCTION

Without the bookmobile hundreds of thousands of people would have no access to public library service. Through it the library has broken out of its four walls and taken information services to the people where they live. Lack of public or private transportation is one of the factors limiting the use of libraries by disadvantaged adults.

It has been shown that people will use bookmobile services who will not go to the public library. The personalized service of the bookmobile is very appealing and there is a high level of satisfaction among bookmobile users. Disadvantaged adults will use the bookmobile, too, in many neighborhoods and in rural areas. This service is particularly important for them because they have urgent information needs. The disadvantaged also have limited leisure time for information seeking because of their particularly time-consuming jobs and family responsibilities. In addition, they do not have ready access to the reliable, free information their low incomes demand. The bookmobile is often their first contact with the public library.

The bookmobile, combined with deposit stations, can provide library service immediately in areas which do not have readily available library services. Mobile services have been used extensively for locating the best places to establish branch libraries in urban neighborhoods. In rural areas the bookmobile and books-by-mail remain the only methods of providing library service.

Bookmobile service is ideally suited to disadvantaged adults since it is informal and friendly. The collection of materials is small enough that they can find what interests them, and they tend to feel more comfortable in the relaxed atmosphere. The staff should make sure that every new user gets something of interest to take home on his or her first visit to the bookmobile.

This guide is divided into the following major sections:

- selecting the bookmobile staff
- offering services from the bookmobile
- stocking the bookmobile
- displaying on the bookmobile
- determining stops
- publicizing bookmobile services
- costs of providing bookmobile services
- pitfalls to avoid
- what other libraries have done
- suggested readings

SELECTING THE BOOKMOBILE STAFF

The bookmobile should try to provide a wide a range of quality public services a possible. The staff should be specially selected based upon their qualification for and interest in such services. Staf members working with disadvantage adults should have special trainin before going on the bookmobile, an in-service training hould be on-going Local school districts, adult basi education teachers, agency personne serving the disadvantaged, and leaders i disadvantaged communities are ofte able to offer training and suggestions.

Ideally the bookmobile is staffed with driver and a librarian. Practically, th staff may consist of only a driver, wh may or may not be a librarian. It i helpful if the driver knows the area an the people, and comes from th neighborhood or rural area being served Bookmobile staff should be recruite from disadvantaged neighborhood whenever possible.

OFFERING SERVICES FROM THE BOOKMOBILE

Reader Guidance

Some of the services the bookmobi staff can provide are reader guidanc film showings, book talks, music, speci requests, and special services.

Bookmobile stops should be long enou to permit people to browse and recei help from the staff in selecting materia Reader guidance services are ve important to

- find out the interests of users a their families
- get the material to the user
- find out what materials are want that the bookmobile can bring on next trip
- explain the use of library services new users

Bookmobiles serving disadvantag adults must stock nonprint me including phonograph records, casse tapes, films, and filmstrips and gam Many bookmobiles in urban areas ca film projectors and provide movi outdoors after dark. Some carry foldi chairs and provide story hours and bo talks for both children and adults. Po readers are accustomed to learni largely through their ears, so nonprint

Film Showings	especially important. Depending upon the number of users who come to a stop, the bookmobile staff may show a film. If a film showing is promised, it must be delivered although the number of users may be small.
Book Talks	The bookmobile staff can offer book or human problem talks as a means of introducing materials to disadvantaged adults. Materials to support the topic of the talk should be available for the users to examine and take home. Such talks are a good way to present helpful information on a problem that the users have. The users themselves should determine the topics of the talks. What the public wants is not always what the staff thinks they should have. The bookmobile staff also can offer story hours for children. The parents may want to listen with their children and enjoy the family activity.
Music	The bookmobile with a loud speaker system and a record player is very popular in some neighborhoods. Adults, especially older ones, enjoy listening to old-time songs and joining in the singing. The bookmobile should stock records and cassette tapes to lend to disadvantaged adults.
Special Requests	The bookmobile should prov materials that users request but wh are not regularly stocked. Request ca placed on the bookmobile can rec information to fill the request on next trip or to mail it to the user's hor Patrons with phones should also be a to call the library to ask for materials be delivered when the bookmobile n visits their neighborhoods.
Special Services	The bookmobile, especially in ru areas, can provide, within reason, a h of services unrelated to traditio information services. It can provide, example: • messenger service in isolated areas • delivery service of goods • a helping hand in emergencies crises • referral services In Floyd County, Kentucky, bookmobile registered voters at its sto Another specialized service bookmobile can provide is to invite specialist from another social agency accompany it on its visits to adult grou and to describe the services of t

	agency to the group. This could be a valuable service to adult basic education classes. The bookmobile staff can advertise for adult basic education classes, giving information on where and when they are held. This would be an excellent opportunity to recruit students on a one-to-one basis. The bookmobile staff will be called upon for help in problem solving and should be aware of the social services offered by other agencies. The bookmobile can be a vital link with such agencies by providing referral services for its users. A bookmobile with a two-way radio can provide a direct link with the information services of the main library.		

STOCKING

THE BOOKMOBILE

What kinds of materials should the bookmobile carry to provide good information services to disadvantaged adults? Selection of materials should depend on the needs of the patrons. Disadvantaged adults have little access to reliable information to help them with the daily life problems. Information is needed in the areas of *aging, children, community, education, family, health, the home, jobs, legal rights, money management, moving, religion, transportation, understanding self and others,* and information about *free time* activities. The bookmobile driver soon learns the interests and information needs of the people s/he serves.

Disadvantaged adults very often are poor or slow readers. They have little leisure time to spend reading, so they often want high interest, easily read pamphlets and paperbacks with few words. The material must be of adult interest and the booklets thin enough so that they can read through them in a reasonable time. Thick hardback books are not popular with poor readers. In many programs the entire bookmobile stock is paperbacks. Other programs stock pamphlets to give away. In addition to reading level and format, book selection criteria should consider the characteristics of the area to be served: the crops and industries, and the cultural

	and religious backgrounds of the users. Books on local history and folklore are wanted. The well-stocked bookmobile will carry a small collection of reference books such as a dictionary, encyclopedia, atlas, almanac, book of facts and the Bible. The bookmobile should also stock a small collection of large print books for the visually handicapped.		

DISPLAYING ON THE BOOKMOBILE

To encourage disadvantaged adults t browse, displays of materials on th bookmobile should include display rack for paperbacks and pamphlets an perhaps a table to show material face-up. Pegboard is an inexpensive ye effective material for displayin paperbacks and pamphlets. Colorful new books are very attractive to users o all ages and backgrounds, includin disadvantaged adults. Colorful well-illustrated pamphlets or paperback on a subject of interest are often selecte even though they may be at a readin level which is difficult.

Many bookmobile programs interfil adult and juvenile materials ver successfully. Interfiling lets the adul choose material s/he can read from th juvenile collection withou embarrassment. His or her children ca also easily find their comfortable readin and content level.

Pamphlets to give away can be displaye very attractively in a pamphlet rack wit each item stamped "FREE, PLEAS TAKE ONE." The rack itself may have sign on it to let people know they ca take the material. Free material some times gets an informal circulation amon the family and friends of disadvantage adults. Pamphlets, of course, can als be circulated.

DETERMINING STOPS

Where should the bookmobile stop to provide services to disadvantaged adults? Routes and stops can be selected by the following methods:

- Visits to the area to be served to find out where people meet and what their interests are. Staff members who know the area and some of the people can visit stores and post offices asking questions and listening.

- Contacts with the personnel in other agencies that serve disadvantaged adults. These agencies can provide valuable information and can also refer their clients to the bookmobile.

- Trial stops to find out which locations are most popular. A sign in the local post office or grocery store can announce the service and the locations of new stops. Stops, however, should not be judged entirely upon numbers of patrons, or the most isolated will continue to be the poorest served.

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In providing bookmobile service to disadvantaged adults, the time of the stops is as important as the location of the stops. The regular schedule for daytime hours probably will have to be altered to include late afternoon evening stops. Working adults, including those drawing low incomes, often cannot use day bookmobile services because of conflict with their work schedules. Stops also can be arranged at the factories where they work and in some cases, bookmobiles can service deposit collections in the lunch-rooms of factories.

Libraries around the country have tried a variety of stops in both rural and urban areas. In urban areas these have included

- street corners
- parks and school playgrounds
- housing projects
- settlement houses
- homes for the aged
- churches
- adult education classes
- shopping centers
- individual homes
- factories

Libraries in rural areas have had bookmobile stops and deposit stations serviced by the bookmobile in

- post offices
- grocery stores
- church lobbies
- individual homes
- crossroads stores
- service stations
- adult education classes

Some door-to-door canvassing may be necessary in setting up new routes, since success depends largely on how well the service is publicized. After a trial period of one to two months, some stops will be abandoned if usage is very low. The staff should use its judgment as to when to abandon a stop based upon local conditions, but a stop should seldom be abandoned after only one trip.

PUBLICIZING BOOKMOBILE SERVICES

The people must be informed
bookmobile service if it is to be use
Reaching disadvantaged adults requi
all possible means, including perso
contact, radio and television, newspap
and fliers. Of these, personal contact
the most effective. Many people s
announcements on television or
newspapers but do not associate t
service with themselves and their nee

Word of Mouth

The bookmobile staff should tell peop
in the community who are the lead
and who are trusted. This should inclu
the adult basic education coordinato
who can tell the teachers.

Newspapers

Newspaper stories, with pictures of t
bookmobile and a description of t
services, will reach those disadvantag
adults who read newspapers. T
newspaper stories should include t
bookmobile schedules; and wh
possible, the newspaper should carry t
schedule for each day.

Radio and Television

Radio and television spo
announcements will also reach som
groups of disadvantaged adults. Som
poor readers, accustomed to learni
through their ears, will respond to the
announcements who would not respon
to print.

Fliers	Fliers can describe the bookmobile service and give the schedule of stops. These should be kept brief, and limited to a small sheet of paper. The library can use several methods to distribute fliers: • mailing to all homes. This is expensive because of postal charges. The library should consult the local post office on costs and handling. • distributing through grocery stores in disadvantaged neighborhoods through arrangements with the store managers • distributing through schools so that children can take the fliers home. The library should contact the superintendent to obtain permission and to work out a system • arranging with the ministers of churches to leave a supply of fliers in church lobbies or with church groups to be distributed to members. Leave enough copies so that people can take copies to their friends and neighbors. • arrange with employers to have fliers placed in paycheck envelopes.
Posters	Colorful posters showing a picture of the bookmobile and listing stops and time schedules can be a useful publicity device. Clever slogans containing puns

	are less effective with disadvantag clientele than simple, clear explanatio of the services to be offered.
Personal Contact	Although expensive in staff tim nothing is as effective in reachi disadvantaged adults as knocking their doors and inviting them to use t bookmobile. Staff members, recruit from the area to be served and w know the neighborhood and some of t people, are also effective. Disadvantag adults are more likely to come to t bookmobile in their own neighborho than to a branch library. T bookmobile service is informal a offers personal contact. Disadvantag clients are not likely to come alone, s is wise to invite groups such as clu adult basic education classes, and chur organizations.
Jingles	Bookmobiles with loudspeakers can p jingles to announce their arrival in neighborhood. Many bookmobiles urban areas have used this technic effectively.
Buttons and Certificates	Bookmobile service can include readi programs for children and adu Summer reading programs for child can be publicized in disadvantag neighborhoods by giving away butt with slogans such as "I Read Books" "My Library Loves Me."

Bookmarks	Bookmarks can be passed out which list the bookmobile schedule, new books, films which will be shown, etc. People like colorful bookmarks and will take them home to keep. In working with disadvantaged adults, a combination of methods of publicizing the service must be used. They are a difficult group to reach and to serve since they have limited transportation, spend little time in groups, and generally have had some bad experiences with public service agencies. However, once they use the bookmobile, they are likely to come back again because of its informal, friendly atmosphere.		

COSTS OF BOOKMOBILE SERVICE

The costs of providing expand bookmobile services to disadvantag adults will include the followi categories of expense:

- Materials
- Staff costs for evening hours
- Maintenance costs for the extend services
- Special vehicle
- Cost per transaction

Materials

Library service to disadvantaged adu requires materials that are easily read b on topics of interest to adults. These a often termed *life coping skills materia* While they are equally usable by adults, they are essential in service disadvantaged adults. These materi usually are not among the holdings traditional public libraries. Nonpri materials are also needed. If the regu bookmobile is used to expand services the disadvantaged, these materials shou be added to its stock. If a special van used, its entire stock should be selec to meet the information needs of special group to be served.

Costs of materials especially selected

disadvantaged adults are relatively low because paperback books and inexpensive pamphlets not only can be used, but are frequently preferred by this user group. The costs of stocking the bookmobile will depend upon the quantity of new materials needed and what can be used from the library's regular stock. Some libraries maintain a separate collection for bookmobile use. Others prefer to draw materials from the library's regular collections. The choice depends on local resources, facilities, and preferences. If the library has magazines to be given away, these make good materials for use on the bookmobile.

Staff Costs

Some libraries rearrange regular bookmobile schedules to provide staff time for new stops and late afternoon hours. Otherwise, additional money for salaries and vehicle maintenance is needed. In some library programs, volunteers provide the additional manpower at little or no cost.

Maintenance Costs

Costs for gasoline and other items for vehicle maintenance will increase with expanded routes, longer hours, energy shortages and inflation. The bookmobile will require mechanical service and repairs more often. Garages often are not open on Saturday so a week day must be set aside for this work. Time and personnel must be scheduled for cleaning and for replenishing stock. All activi involving maintenance must scheduled and budget allocations m to cover them.

Special Vehicles

Many libraries have chosen to specially outfitted smaller vans or b for bookmobiles in disadvantaged a because of their lower costs and gre convenience. Volkswagen vans have b very popular because of their low in cost (about $5000), their sturdiness, their low maintenance costs. Equip with shelving and display racks, pain bright colors, and equipped w loudspeaker systems, they have b widely used in urban areas where park a large bookmobile would be a problem. They are the right size special collections needed for service the disadvantaged.

Some libraries have used a larger vehi such as Winnebago family camper, wh can be acquired and equipped a bookmobile for about $15,000. T offer conveniences such as conditioning, cooking, refrigerat facilities, and toilets. This larger vehi can be used in an area serving population of 50,000 to 100,000.

Parcel delivery trucks about 20 feet length have also been used bookmobile service. These can

	outfitted with wiring and sound equipment, built-in desks and storage cabinets. They cost $12,000 to $15,000. Standard station wagons, small ranch trucks, jeeps, and jeep station wagons have also served as bookmobiles. These vehicles are designed for special conditions such as poor roads and rugged terrain. The needs of the service area will dictate which vehicle is the best choice.		
Costs Per Transaction.	The cost per transaction on the bookmobile includes operating costs of the vehicle, the staff costs, book acquisition and processing, book losses, and other depreciation. There are many variables effecting costs from one region to another and from one library to another, but a figure that can be used for planning purposes, based on various studies, is $.50 per transaction. Costs per transaction do decrease as service is expanded.		

PITFALLS TO AVOID

Some pitfalls to avoid in expanding services to disadvantaged adults by bookmobile are generally omissions and failure to make preparations ahead of time in the following areas:

- Planning the service
- Selecting an appropriate vehicle
- Special training for the staff
- Preparing an appropriate collection of materials
- Scheduling and selecting new stops
- Recruiting users
- Allowing for distances between homes in rural areas
- Allowing for poor or narrow roads

Planning the Service

Although the bookmobile is especially suited to provide the informal, easily available services attractive to disadvantaged adults, it is not as simple as loading up and driving away. The library must plan for this service as for any other. In brief, planning involves determining the need for the service, allocating staff time, funds, and equipment for it. determining materials

needs, and deciding how much, where, and when the service will be available.

Selecting a Vehicle

The selection of a vehicle to be used for bookmobile service will depend upon what it can afford. What kind of service the library intends to offer as well as the condition of roads, the width of streets and roads, and availability of parking facilities should also be considered. The size of the vehicle also will determine the maintenance costs. Where and how much service is to be offered should be the guideline in selecting a vehicle.

Special Training for the Staff

Staff selection and training are very important to success in working with disadvantaged adults. Disadvantaged adults respond to a one-to-one contact that may require fresh interpersonal skills on the part of the library staff. The staff should know the characteristics of disadvantaged adults in their community, their economic and educational levels, their problems in getting and keeping jobs, their information needs for dealing with family problems, health, nutrition, and housing. Staff should be friendly and respectful. Staff training may be informally provided through the personnel of other community agencies—social workers, county extension agents, adult basic educati teachers, and others. The librari should check with the board education for available training progra that they may have for teachers. Libra schools are offering formal courses a state libraries and library associations offering workshops on library service disadvantaged. The library sho contact these organizations about st training.

Preparing an Appropriate Collection of Materials

The library must have materials suita for use with disadvantaged adults bef the expanded program can begin . L of materials which are easily read and topics of interest to disadvantaged ad will result in disappointment to the and frustration to the staff. Identify and acquiring appropriate materials first.

Scheduling and Selecting New Stops

Finding the right stop and the best t to go there is an early problem. M depends upon the users—their economic conditions, educational le and available leisure time. Some s require more scheduling than oth nursing homes, housing projects, eve classes, and playgrounds, for exam pose different scheduling problems. stop must be cancelled, the staff sh ask the local radio station to broadc spot announcement so that users will be disappointed and inconvenience

	the cancellation is permanent, as many regular users as possible should be contacted personally.		impossible for a large vehicle to ge through. Meeting schedules is difficul and the slow speed required makes cost of operation go up tremendously. Th use of smaller vehicles is almost necessity under these conditions.
Recruiting Users	Recruiting users among disadvantaged adults must be a continuous process if the service is to be a success. All possible approaches must be used. Parking the bookmobile in a disadvantaged neighborhood will not bring the adult residents to it. One approach which can be very successful is to contact existing groups in the neighborhood such as Scouts, Headstart classes and the mothers, sewing clubs, church groups, etc., and invite the groups to visit the bookmobile together.		Heavy traffic in urban areas is also hazard. Bookmobiles tend to gain many dents early in life. Management o accidents needs to be thought through Traffic jams will often prevent meetin schedules.
Rural Areas	Rural areas are often assumed to be like the city, but they have their own set of problems or obstacles to bookmobile service. The distances between homes can make service very expensive. Some libraries have identified individuals who will serve as leaders in the rural area and deliver books to homes in their area. Deposit stations in crossroads stores and service stations are also developed which the bookmobile can service occasionally.		
Poor or Narrow Streets and Roads	Especially in rural areas, road conditions can be a real obstacle for the bookmobile. When the weather is bad and the road narrow, it is virtually		

WHAT OTHER LIBRARIES HAVE DONE

Hundreds of libraries have offere
expanded services to disadvantage
adults through the bookmobile. Som
are selected here to demonstrate variet
in services and in the kinds of vehicl
used.

Floyd County
Kentucky

Prestonsburg has been very successful
serving the community through bas
education class stops at night an
books-by-mail. It has overcome many
the problems of serving a large rural are

Lexington Public Library
Lexington, Kentucky

This library has two very popul
bookmobiles that particularly serve t
disadvantaged: a larger mo
conventional bookmobile called t
"In-Mobile," and a smaller one. The smal
bookmobile makes stops at potent
ABE class sites in Appalachi
communities in the inner city and
rural racially mixed areas in t
surrounding county. Rules are flexibl
books taken out are recorded in
notebook and checked off wh
returned, no library cards are require
no overdue fines are charged. The boo

are mostly paperbacks. Magazines and comics are also popular in the large bookmobile.

Macon County Public Library
Tuskegee, Alabama

A Volkswagen van equipped as a bookmobile provided an extensive and varied program at relatively low cost.

Anniston-Calhoun County Public Library
Anniston, Alabama

A Winnebago, purchased and equipped as a bookmobile in 1973, is a very satisfactory choice for Calhoun County.

Denver Public Library
Denver, Colorado

Denver provided bookmobile service in a Spanish-speaking area of the city. Stock included bilingual materials and the staff was bilingual. No charges were made for loss or overdues. Losses were small.

Corpus Christi Public Library
Corpus Christi, Texas

Corpus Christi used bookmobiles in disadvantaged areas as a part of a community action program. The staff learned Spanish. Adult and juvenile materials were interfiled.

Jacksonville Public Library
Jacksonville, Florida

The Jacksonville Public Library decorated vans in bright colors for both urban and rural use, recruited bi-racial staff of high school and college students, and used paperbacks, magazines, and pamphlets extensively.

South Eastern Ohio
Regional Library
Caldwell, Ohio

Bookmobiles from this library serve a six-county region, with paraprofessional readers' advisors working on the bookmobile. The bookmobiles have two-way radio hook-up to the regional library headquarters for expanded outreach for reference and information and referral services.

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LIBRARY SERVICE GUIDES

1. Materials Selection for Disadvantaged Adults
2. Assessing Community Information and Service Needs
3. Using Pamphlets with Disadvantaged Adults
4. Deposit Collections of Special Materials for Disadvantaged Adults
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13. Conducting Tours to the Library for Groups of Disadvantaged Adults
14. ABE—What Is It?
15. The Relationship of Disadvantagement to Library Services
16. In-service Training of Personnel to Serve Disadvantaged Adults
17. Adult Education in the Library: ABE, GED, CLEP, and the Open University
18. Book Talks: Encouraging Library Materials Usage by Disadvantaged Adults
19. Techniques for Teachers: Teaching the Application of Basic Skills to Everyday Life Problems
20. Displaying Materials for Disadvantaged Adults
21. Bookmobile Services: Moving the Library to Disadvantaged Adults
22. Expanding Library Services to the Elderly
23. Using Audiovisuals With Disadvantaged Adults
24. Expanding Library Services to the Institutionalized
25. Interagency Cooperation: The Public Library and Agencies that Serve Disadvantaged Adults
26. Adjusting School Libraries for Use by Disadvantaged Adults
27. Speakers Bureaus for Disadvantaged Adults
28. Maintaining Separate Collections of Library Materials for Disadvantaged Adults
29. Client Participation in Expanding Library Services to Disadvantaged Adults
30. The Role of the College Library in the Education of Disadvantaged Adults
31. Public Library Services to Young Disadvantaged Adults
32. Working with Elected Officials to Expand Library Services to Disadvantaged Adults

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